

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1774
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMCONSUL OPORTO
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USCINCEUR
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PONTA DELGADA 0343

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PO
SUBJECT: MOTA AMARAL REVIEWS FIRST YEAR OF AZOREAN REGIONAL
GOVERNMENT

REF: PONTA DELGADA 0327

SUMMARY: IN A TELEVISED SEPTEMBER 8 PRESS CONFERENCE, AZOREAN
REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (RGA) PRESIDENT JOAO BOSCO MOTA AMARAL
DISCUSSED THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION DURING ITS FIRST
YEAR AND RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS FROM THE MEDIA. ACCORDING TO MOTA
AMARAL, HIS GOVERNMENT'S MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS WERE TO ESTABLISH A
TRULY REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN THE ISLANDS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN
RECENT HISTORY AND TO REACH A BASIC UNDERSTANDING WITH THE CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE TRANSFER OF PERIPHERAL SERVICES TO
RGA RESPONSIBILITY. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS, THE RGA PRESIDENT
ACKNOWLEDGED SERIOUS INEFFICIENCIES IN THE OPERATION OF THE RGA'S
SECRETARIATS WHOSE WIDE PHYSICAL DISPERSAL WAS DICTATED BY
INTER-ISLAND POLITICS AND INDICATED HE WOULD FAVOR CONSOLIDATING
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THEM AT SOME UNDEFINED POINT IN THE FUTURE. ON OTHER SUBJECTS,
MOTA AMARAL TOOK ANOTHER SHOT AT THE SOCIALISTS FOR THEIR INSISTENCE
IN PUSHING FOR A DEFINITIVE STATUTE OF AUTONOMY FOR THE REGION NOW
AND AGAIN STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT A NATIONAL LEVEL PSD/PS
AGREEMENT WOULD NOT OBLIGE THE REGIONAL PSD TO GIVE UP ITS ONE
PARTY RULE OF THE ISLANDS. FINALLY, THE RGA PRESIDENT VOICED HIS
DISAPPROVAL OVER THE RECENT SPATE OF FLA BOMBINGS AS DAMAGING TO

LIBERTY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUTONOMY. END OF SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS OPENING REMARKS, MOTA AMARAL JUDGED THE FIRST YEAR'S PERFORMANCE OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO BE ON BALANCE POSITIVE. HE OBSERVED THAT WHEN THE RGA ASSUMED OFFICE, IT FOUND ITSELF GOVERNING A REGION UNITED ONLY IN GEOGRAPHY. FROM AN ADMINISTRATIVE POINT OF VIEW, HOWEVER, THE ARCHIPELAGO WAS STILL DIVIDED INTO THREE OLD DISTRICTS. THE RGA'S FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS WAS TO CREATE A TRULY REGIONAL GOVERNMENT, A TASK HE FELT HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. THE NEXT MAJOR CHALLENGE WAS TO SORT OUT WHICH SERVICES WOULD PASS FROM CENTRAL TO REGIONAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL. DESPITE NUMEROUS FALSE STARTS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS, MOTA AMARAL ASSERTED THAT THE RGA'S PERFORMANCE IN EFFECTING TRANSFER OF "PERIPHERAL SERVICES" WAS ALSO FAVORABLE. THE RGA, HE SAID, WAS NOW REACHING A CERTAIN "LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING" ON THIS SUBJECT WITH LISBON. THIS UNDERSTANDING, HE EXPLAINED, WAS BASED ON MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE THAT THE CONSTITUTION EXPRESSLY ATTRIBUTES CERTAIN GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS TO THE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS. DRAWING ON THAT BASIS, HE CONTINUED, THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT THAT THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY TO EXECUTE ALL LAWS, BOTH OF REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ORIGIN, EXCEPT THOSE WHOSE EXECUTION WAS RESERVED SPECIFICALLY TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN THE CONSTITUTION.

2. IN THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD THAT FOLLOWED MOTA AMARAL MADE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS.

A. RGA ORGANIZATION: THE DISPERSAL OF THE RGA'S NINE
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SECRETARIATS AMONG THE THREE PRINCIPAL ISLANDS OF THE AZOREAN

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ARCHIPELAGO WAS AIMED AT ESTABLISHING A POLITICAL EQUILIBRIUM AMONG THE FORMER DISTRICTS. HE ADMITTED THAT THE FIRST YEAR'S EXPERIENCE REVEALED THE RGA HAD A LONG WAY TO GO IN IMPROVING COORDINATION AMONG AND EFFECIENCY OF THE SECRETARIATS. IN THAT REGARD, THE RGA'S PRESENT STRUCTURE SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED PERMANENT. AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE HE PERSONALLY WOULD FAVOR THE MERGING OF THOSE SECRETARIATS WITH SIMILAR FUNCTIONS.

B. DEFINITIVE AUTONOMY STATUTE: THE TIME WAS NOT RIGHT TO DRAFT A DEFINITIVE STATUTE OF AUTONOMY WHICH WOULD SET FORTH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE REGIONAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS. IT WAS INDESPENSABLE THAT THIS QUESTION BE DEFERRED UNTIL THE RGA HAD MORE EXPERIENCE AND KNEW WHICH SERVICES IT COULD AND COULD NOT PERFORM. MOTA AMARAL CLAIMED THAT THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTERS OF A DEFINITIVE STATUTE NOW IN FACT FAVORING THE REGION'S SCOPE OF AUTONOMY.

C. EFFECT OF NATIONAL PSD/PS RAPPROCHEMENT ON RGA: THE CURRENT RGA, WHICH WAS CONTROLLED EXCLUSIVELY BY THE PSD, CORRESPONDED TO THE EXPRESSED WILL OF THE AZOREAN PEOPLE. ONLY THOSE WHO DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY
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ESTABLISHED BY THE CONSTITUTION COULD ENTERTAIN SUSPICIONS THAT A NATIONAL LEVEL PSD/PS UNDERSTANDING MIGHT FORCE THE RGA TO ALTER WHAT WAS MANDATED BY THE AZOREAN PEOPLE.

D. SEPARATIST VIOLENCE: DESPITE SOME TROUBLED PERIODS, THE FIRST YEAR OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WAS ONE OF RELATIVE STABILITY. NONETHELESS, EVERYONE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT LIBERTY CAN FUNCTION ONLY SO LONG AS THERE IS A GENERAL CONSENSUS AND ACCEPTANCE OF LIBERTY. THE RECENT SPATE OF BOMBINGS SIGNALLED A SICKNESS AND A THREAT TO LIBERTY WHICH MUST BE CURED.

3. COMMENT: IN ALLEGING BASIC RGA/CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL DIVISION OF AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY MOTA AMARAL IS STRETCHING THE TRUTH, APPARENTLY BECAUSE HE BELIEVES THAT DOWNPLAYING OF FRICTIONS MAY MAKE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MORE RECEPTIVE TO HIS AUTONOMY DEMANDS. IN FACT, DIFFERENCES OVER INTERPRETATIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL ATTRIBUTIONS DO EXIST. IT IS EVIDENT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE RGA IS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY CONVINCING THE SOARES GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT ITS PRETENTIONS TO ACQUIRE MORE AUTHORITY IN THE FIELDS OF BANKING AND FOREIGN

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EXCHANGE MANAGEMENT (REFTEL). EVEN THE TRANSFER OF PERIPHERAL SERVICES HAS NOT ALWAYS GONE SMOOTHLY. IN LATE AUGUST, REGIONAL LABOR SECRETARY ANTONIO LAGARTO RETURNED FROM LISBON VISIBLY INCENSED AND FRUSTRATED OVER HIS FAILURE TO PERSUADE THE LABOR MINISTER TO PERMIT AN RGA APPOINTED LABOR DELEGATE TO TAKE OVER THE FUNCTIONS OF THE LISBON LABOR MINISTRY COUFLPRPART AND TO ALLOW THE LOCAL CIVIL COURTS TO TAKE ON LABOR COURT CASES IN ORDER TO REDUCE A HUGE BACKLOG.

4. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, MOTA AMARAL AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN QUICK TO ADMIT THE FACT THAT THE CURRENT LARGE NUMBER (NINE) AND DISPERSAL OF THE RGA SECRETARIATS HAS CREATED AN EXPENSIVE ADMINISTRATIVE NIGHTMARE MADE TO ORDER FOR INEFFICIENCY. HOWEVER, THEY INSIST THAT THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT MANDATED BY THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MUST REMAIN IN EFFECT SEVERAL MORE YEARS UNTIL THE HISTORIC INTER-ISLAND RIVALRIES HAVE DIMINISHED SUFFICIENTLY TO MAKE CENTRALIZATION OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT POLITICALLY FEASIBLE.

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5. MOTA AMARAL'S CENSURE OF CALLS TO DRAW UP A DEFINITIVE STATUTE OF AUTONOMY NOW WAS AIMED DIRECTLY AT THE SOCIALIST PARTY. EVEN IN ITS RECENT, MORE MODERATE CONFIGURATION IN THE ISLANDS, THE PS HAS CONTINUED TO VOICE SUPPORT FOR A NEW STATUTE NOW. TO PSD LEADERS CONVINCED THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO ACHIEVE THE MAXIMUM LEVEL OF AUTONOMY IS FIRST TO EXPLOIT TO THE FULLEST EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE PROVISIONAL STATUTE, THE SOCIALIST POSITION SIMPLY BETRAYS THAT PARTY'S LESS THAN TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THE CONCEPT OF A VIGOROUS, EXTENSIVE REGIONAL AUTONOMY. MOTA AMARAL'S STRONG NATURAL AVERSION TO ALLOWING THE SOCIALISTS INTO HIS GOVERNMENT IS ONLY REINFORCED BY HIS SUSPICIONS OF THE PS'S TRUE POSITION ON THE AUTONOMY ISSUE.

6. MOTA AMARAL'S CRITICISM OF THE RECENT SEPARATIST BOMBINGS IN SAO MIGUEL AND TERCEIRA ARE IN LINE WITH HIS BELIEF THAT SEPARATIST ACTS OF VIOLENCE DAMAGE RGA RELATIONS WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THEREFORE MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR LISBON TO CEDE ADDITIONAL AUTONOMY TO THE AZORES. HIS PRESS CONFERENCE COMMENTS WILL REINFORCE FLA OPPOSITION TO THE RGA.
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